

Message Text

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TAGS: SOPN, VS

SUBJECT: PRESS MATERIAL

1. HERewith FULL TEXT TOM DOWLING STORY, THURSDAY, MAY 22
WASHINGTON STAR HEADLINED "ENVOY MARTIN HAD HIS OWN GAME
PLAN".

2. "AMBASSADOR MARTIN WAS IN A VERY DIFFICULT POSITION,"
SAID HENRY KISSINGER ON APRIL 29, RIGHT AFTER THE LAST
AMERICAN LEFT VIETNAM. "HE FELT A MORAL OBLIGATION TO THE
PEOPLE WITH WHOM HE HAD BEEN ASSOCIATED. AND HE ATTEMPTED
TO SAVE AS MANY OF THEM AS POSSIBLE."

3. ELEVEN DAYS EARLIER, COMMUNIST TROOPS HAD SURROUNDED
SAIGON. THERE WERE REPORTS OF COMMUNISTS STAGING SAVAGE
BEHEADINGS IN DA NANG. ON THAT DAY, APRIL 18, THE
STAR HAS LEARNED, KISSINGER RECEIVED A CABLE FROM HIS
ESTEEMED SAIGON PROCONSUL. AMBASSADOR GRAHAM MARTIN
CABLED THAT HE HAD NO PLAN TO EVACUATE THE LOCAL
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VIETNAMESE EMPLOYEES OF THE AMERICAN MISSION IN SOUTH
VIETNAM. MARTIN WENT ON TO SAY, ACCORDING TO GOVERNMENT
OFFICIALS WHO HAVE SEEN THE MISSIVE, THAT HE HAD NO PLAN
TO PULL THEM OUT, BECAUSE (A) THEY WERE TOO NUMEROUS

(SOMEWHERE BETWEEN 12,000 AND 16,000 EMPLOYEES, NOT COUNTING THEIR ESTIMATED EIGHT DEPENDENTS APIECE) AND

(B) TO EVACUATE THEM WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO PUBLIC PANIC IN SAIGON, NOT TO MENTION THE ATTENDANT COLLAPSE OF THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT. IN A FINAL FLOURISH, MARTIN ADDED THAT THE MOST HE WAS PREPARED TO DO - BY WAY OF "MORAL OBLIGATION," ONE ASSUMES - WAS TO ADVISE HIS LOYAL VIETNAMESE EMPLOYEES AS TO WHICH POINTS ALONG THE COAST THEY MIGHT FLEE IN HOPES OF BEING PICKED UP BY AMERICAN VESSELS AND AIRCRAFT.

4. TWO DAYS LATER, ON APRIL 20, THE STATE DEPARTMENT CABLED BACK, SAYING MARTIN'S MESSAGE WAS UNACCEPTABLE. THE ALARMED KISSINGER SAID MARTIN HAD TO HAVE A PLAN TO EVACUATE VIETNAMESE EMPLOYEES AND DEMANDED TO BE TOLD WHAT IT WAS.

5. MUCH AGAINST HIS INCLINATION, MARTIN BEGAN TO DRAW UP HIS "PLAN," A PLAN - IF THAT'S THE WORD FOR IT - WHICH WHEN FINALLY IMPLEMENTED FOUR DAYS LATER WOULD LEAVE PERHAPS AS MANY AS 10,000 FRIGHTENED AND DESPERATE SOUTH VIETNAMESE AMERICAN EMPLOYEES BEHIND, A PLAN WHICH WOULD MAKE EMBITTERED AND SHAMED LIARS OUT OF MANY OF THE 6,000 AMERICANS WHO GOT OUT - MORE BY MIRACLE THAN DESIGN. IT WAS EVEN A PLAN WHICH HAD ROOM IN IT FOR THE ESCAPE OF MARTIN'S PET POODLE, NITNOY - "LITTLE THING" IN THAI - WHICH FLED BY HELICOPTER TETHERED TO THE LEG OF ONE OF MARTIN'S HOUSEHOLD SERVANTS. YES, THE AMBASSADOR'S VIETNAMESE FRIENDS AND PETS GOT OUT.

6. AND, SO VIETNAM WOULD END AS IT BEGAN AND ENDURED: FILLED WITH THE B RHETORIC OF "MORAL OBLIGATION" FROM OUR LEADERS WHO FELT NONE, ANIMATED BY EFFICIENT-SOUNDING PLANS THAT WERE FICTIONAL. INDEED, MARTIN'S LAST-MINUTE ESCAPE "PLAN" WAS NOTHING BUT THE LOGICAL AFTER-BIRTH OF RICHARD NIXON'S 1968 CAMPAIGN "SECRET PLAN" UNCLASSIFIED

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TO END THE WAR, JUST AS KISSINGER'S SALUTATION TO HIS PROCONSUL'S "MORAL OBLIGATION" WAS BUT ONE LAST SEEDY EXAMPLE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S UTTER LACK OF PERSONAL INTEGRITY. HOW, AFTER ALL, DOES AN AMBASSADOR WHO IS PREPARED TO DESERT EVERY LAST VIETNAMESE IN HIS EMPLOY ON APRIL 18 ACQUIRE A SENSE OF "MORAL OBLIGATION" ABOUT SAVING "AS MANY OF THEM AS POSSIBLE" ON APRIL 29?

7. THIS IS THE FUNDAMENTAL MORAL QUESTION THAT ASSAULTS AMERICAN OFFICIALDOM NOW RETURNING TO WASHINGTON FROM SAIGON. BECAUSE, OF COURSE, MARTIN'S ROLE IN SOUTH VIETNAM'S FINAL AGONY, AS PIECED TOGETHER FROM CONVERSATIONS WITH RANKING AMERICAN OFFICIALS POSSESSING

DIRECT KNOWLEDGE OF EVENTS IN SAIGON AND WASHINGTON, WAS

BUT ANOTHER EXTENSION OF U.S. DECEPTION IN VIETNAM -
PRACTICED THIS TIME ON OUR OWN LOYAL EMPLOYEES, AMERICAN
AND SOUTH VIETNAMESE ALIKE.

8. TO GRASP THE FULL MAGNITUDE OF THE BETRAYAL INVOLVED
IN THE LAST DAYS OF THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE IN SOUTH
VIETNAM, IT IS NECESSARY TO UNDERSTAND THE LOYALTIES AND
INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE U.S. MISSION, WHICH THE ALMOST
PATHOLOGICALLY CANTANKEROUS AND ISOLATED GRAHAM MARTIN
HEADED. LEAVING ASIDE THE MORAL HORROR OF THE WAR
ITSELF, THE MEN WHO FOUGHT ON ONE SIDE OF IT - AMERICANS
AND SOUTH VIETNAMESE - DEVELOPED A CLOSENESS AKIN TO THE
BUDDIES-IN-A-FOXHOLE SYNDROME. THE AMERICANS CAME AND
WENT; THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE WHO WORKED FOR THEM IN DEFENSE,
AID, STATE, USIA AND OTHER AGENCIES STAYED. IT WAS
UNDERSTOOD THAT SHOULD THE DEBACLE FINALLY COME, THE
AMERICAN MISSION'S SOUTH VIETNAMESE EMPLOYEES - RESIGNED,
RETIRED AND ON THE CURRENT PAYROLLS - WOULD BE EVACUATED,
PROTECTED FROM THE POSSIBILITY OF A COMMUNIST REPRISAL
BY THE LIGHTS OF "OUR" SIDE'S VISCERAL VIEWPOINT.

9. WHEN THE END BECAME SELF-EVIDENT IN MARCH AND APRIL,
THE UNSPOKEN COMMITMENT WAS FINALLY VERBALIZED. AMERICANS
TOLD THEIR VIETNAMESE COWORKERS THEY'D GET OUT, THAT
THERE WAS A "PLAN" TO SEE TO IT THAT THEY WOULD. INDEED,
DURING THE MONTH OF APRIL MANY OFFICIAL AMERICANS DID
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LITTLE ELSE BUT ASSURE THEIR SOUTH VIETNAMESE COLLEAGUES
THAT THEY'D BE ON THE EVACUATION PLANES OUT - ALONG WITH
THEIR FAMILIES. WHAT HONOR WAS THERE LEFT TO US, BUT
THAT OF FRIENDSHIP?

10. GRAHAM MARTIN HAD NO SUCH NOTION. INDEED, IN LATE
FEBRUARY AND EARLY MARCH HE WAS ASSURING VISITING
CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATIONS THAT THERE WAS LIGHT AT THE
END OF THE TUNNEL, PROVIDED THE CONGRESS FORKED OVER
\$6.5 BILLION IN A THREE-YEAR PERIOD TO ENSURE "SELF-
SUFFICIENCY" FOR THE THIEU GOVERNMENT. "THE MAN WAS
ABSOLUTELY CLEAR AND SINCERE ABOUT THAT," REMEMBERS
REP. PETE MCCLOSKEY, WHO WAS PART OF THE DELEGATION.
"IT WAS BIZARRE. WHY, HE DIDN'T EVEN HAVE A CONTINGENCY
PLAN."

11. NO PLAN THEN. NO PLAN ON APRIL 18, WHEN CIA
INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATES WERE FORECASTING A TOTAL COMMUNIST
TAKEOVER NO LATER THAN JUNE.

12. IN EARLY APRIL, AMERICAN OFFICIALDOM IN SAIGON
DEMANDED TO KNOW WHAT MARTIN HAD IN MIND BY WAY OF

EVACUATING LOCAL SOUTH VIETNAMESE EMPLOYEES. AT THE DAILY MORNING STAFF MEETINGS CHAIRED BY DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION WOLFGANG LEHMANN, THE QUESTIONING GREW TARTER. WHAT WAS THE PLAN TO GET OUT OUR LOCALS? LEHMANN WOULD SAY THINGS LIKE: "WE'LL TAKE CARE OF IT," OR "WE'RE THINKING ABOUT IT," OR "DON'T WORRY." NO OUTRIGHT LIES, JUST DECEPTIONS.

13. DAY BY DAY THE INSISTENCE ON BEING CUT IN ON THE "PLAN" GREW. ACCORDING TO EYEWITNESSES AT THE 15 - TO - 20-PERSON-STRONG MORNING SENIOR STAFF MEETINGS, THE TWO MOST VOCIFEROUS AND PERSISTENT QUESTIONERS WERE TOM POLGAR, THE CIA STATION CHIEF, AND ALAN CARTER, THE USIA CHIEF. THEY, AND THE OTHERS THERE, WANTED TO BE TOLD OF THE "PLAN," SO THAT THEY COULD GET MOVING TO SAVE THEIR PEOPLE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. IT OCCURRED TO NO ONE THAT THERE WAS NO "PLAN". THE MISSION STAFF SAW MARTIN AS A "MESSIANIC" MAN, NOT AN IGNOBLE ONE. UNCLASSIFIED

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14. AND SO THE APRIL 18 MARTIN CABLE TO KISSINGER STRUCK WITH ALL THE ASTONISHING FORCE OF PERFDY. MARTIN HAD BETRAYED TENS OF THOUSANDS OF SOUTH VIETNAMESE WHO TRUSTED AMERICA, BELIEVED IN HER AS THE AFTERLIFE SHOULD THE WAR GO BADLY. HE HAD ALSO PUT HIS OWN AMERICAN COLLEAGUES IN THE DISGRACEFUL POSITION OF HAVING UNWITTINGLY LIED TO THEIR FRIENDS AND COWORKERS.

15. "THE LOCALS WHO TRUSTED US WERE TRAPPED," SAYS ONE OFFICIAL. "YES, I'M ASHAMED. I HAVEN'T HAD DREAMS AT NIGHT FOR A LONG TIME. THESE LAST WEEKS, EVERY NIGHT IT'S THE SAME: DREAMS OF PEOPLE I KNOW TRYING TO GET OUT." SAY, IF YOU MUST, THAT HIS CONCERN IS MISPLACED BUT THAT DOES NOT LESSEN HIS HUMAN REACTION.

16. FROM APRIL 18 ON IT WAS EVERY MAN FOR HIMSELF - AND NOT MANY OF THEM HAD THE RESOURCES TO DO MUCH, LEAST OF ALL AMERICA'S SOUTH VIETNAMESE EMPLOYEES. IN SOME CASES THERE WASN'T EVEN TIME FOR AMERICAN OFFICIALS TO TELL THEIR COWORKERS THAT THEY PROBABLY WOULDN'T MAKE IT OUT, WOULDN'T EVEN GET THE MONEY THEY'D BEEN PROMISED IN ORDER TO TOUGH IT OUT IF THEY HAD TO STAY BEHIND.

17. THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT - FLYING IN THE FACE OF MARTIN'S ORDERS - FOR SEVERAL WEEKS PRIOR TO APRIL 18 HAD BEEN RUNNING ROUND-THE-CLOCK FIXED-WING, HALF-FILLED EVACUATION FLIGHTS FROM TAN SON NHUT AIRPORT. IT GOT OUT ALMOST ALL OF ITS EMPLOYEES, PLUS MANY BAR GIRLS AND BIGSHOTS WHO BRIBED OR CAJOLED THEIR WAY ABOARD. AT ONE EMBASSY MORNING STAFF MEETING A RANKING

AMERICAN OFFICIAL LOOKED DCM WOLFGANG LEHMANN IN THE EYE AND SAID: "WE'VE GOTTEN ALL THE HOOKERS OUT NOW, HOW ABOUT TAKING CARE OF OUR OWN PEOPLE?"

18. OUR OWN PEOPLE. THE ONES WHO BELIEVED IN US, HOWEVER IMPROBABLY SO. IT WOULD BECOME A LEITMOTIV - TO NO EFFECT. MARTIN FIRED OFF A CABLE TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSMISSION TO THE MAJOR AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS AND TV STATIONS WITH SAIGON BUREAUS, ASSURING THEM THAT UNCLASSIFIED

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THEIR VIETNAMESE EMPLOYEES WOULD GET OUT "BEFORE I GET OUT."

19. "MARTIN WAS GOING TO EVACUATE THE DRIVER FOR ABC NEWS WHO WAS IN NO RISK," SAYS AN OFFICIAL WHO SAW THE CABLE. "I THOUGHT, NO MENTION OF OUR PEOPLE, A LOT OF WHOM WERE IN GREAT JEOPARDY."

20. OTHER THAN THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT, THE ONLY U.S. AGENCY IN SAIGON WITH RESOURCES OF ITS OWN WAS THE CIA. POLGAR, ACCORDING TO SOURCES, BEGAN A LAST-MINUTE "BLACK-FLIGHT" EVACUATION OF HIS OWN VIETNAMESE. IT WAS TOO LITTLE, AND TOO LATE.

21. IT IS HARD TO GET AN ACCURATE READING OF HOW MANY SOUTH VIETNAMESE GOT OUT FROM AMONG THE APPROXIMATELY 120,000 EMPLOYEES AND DEPENDENTS WHO MADE THE EMBASSY'S INFORMAL EVACUATION LISTS DRAWN UP BEFORE THE ABSENCE OF MARTIN'S "PLAN" BECAME KNOWN. THE BEST GUESSES SEEM TO BE ABOUT A THIRD - AND THAT, BY NO MEANS, INCLUDES ALL OF THOSE AT THE TOP OF THE AMERICAN MISSION'S "HIGH-RISK" LIST.

22. PERHAPS THOSE WHO WERE LEFT BEHIND WILL NOT SUFFER REPRISALS - A HOPE WHICH CAN ONLY BECOME A DICTUM IN THE PASSAGE OF TIME, PERHAPS YEARS. THOSE ARE A LOT OF "PERHAPSES." "THEY TRUSTED US ABSOLUTELY, RIGHT UP TO THE END. JESUS CHRIST, THAT'S WHAT'S SO TERRIBLE. AND THEY SHOULDN'T HAVE, THEY SHOULDN'T HAVE," SAYS AN EMBITTERED OFFICIAL WHO WAS THERE.

23. OF COURSE NOT. THERE WAS NO "PLAN" - EVEN THOUGH IT IS STANDARD PROCEDURE AT EVERY AMERICAN DIPLOMATIC INSTALLATION, HOWEVER TRANQUIL, TO HAVE AN EVACUATION PLAN. SAIGON HAD ONE, TOO - IN A FILING CABINET, TWO OR THREE MONTHS OLD - AND WHEN PEOPLE LOOKED AT IT THEY SAW TELEPHONE NUMBERS THAT HAD CEASED TO FUNCTION AND

REMOVAL POINTS THAT WERE IMPOSSIBLE TO GET TO.

24. "BECAUSE OF THE ABILITY OF AMBASSADOR MARTIN, WE

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GOT THEM OUT," SAID GERALD FORD. "WE DID BETTER THAN
WE HAD A RIGHT TO EXPECT."

25. NO, WORSE, FAR WORSE - EVEN BY THE DISHONORABLE
MORAL LIGHTS OF VIETNAM. (END TEXT) INGERSOLL

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